



## Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 30, 2022

Contact: [DCEO.Media@illinois.gov](mailto:DCEO.Media@illinois.gov)

### **Pritzker Administration Encourages Residents to Apply for over \$150 million in Utility Assistance for Families in Need**

SPRINGFIELD –Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today encouraged families in need to apply for \$150 million in utility bill assistance through the Help Illinois Families Program. All families who meet the criteria and provide required documentation are eligible to receive utility bill assistance for natural gas, propane, and electricity through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Since the launch of the program year in September 2021, more than 230,000 households have received utility assistance so far.

In addition to utilities benefits that are available each year, the \$150 million in available benefits includes an additional \$80 million for the Utility Disconnection Avoidance Program (UDAP) for current year LIHEAP recipients who are in imminent threat of utility shut-off. This expanded safety net through UDAP is expected to support over 50,000 additional resident accounts currently on ICC utilities disconnect lists across the state.

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, my administration provided record funding to help families keep a roof over their heads and prevent them from falling behind on their bills,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “With many Illinoisans still facing hardship brought on by COVID-19, we are making sure Illinoisians have additional support to prevent utilities disconnections and ensure families in need can make ends meet.”

“Support for families struggling to pay their household bills is still available through our Help Illinois Families program.” **said DCEO Director Sylvia I. Garcia.** “I urge all Illinoisians in need to visit our website or call our hotline today to apply for assistance; it’s not too late to enroll and receive help with your utility costs.”

Ahead of the voluntary winter utility shut-off moratorium facilitated by the Illinois Commerce Commission ending on March 31, 2022, families should visit [www.helpillinoisfamilies.com](http://www.helpillinoisfamilies.com) to apply or call the hotline for real-time assistance in over 30 languages at 1-833-711-0374.

“The COVID-19 pandemic combined with high energy prices has put a tremendous financial strain on many consumers. The Illinois Commerce Commission remains very concerned and continues to work

with utilities and advocacy groups to protect low-income customers from losing vital utility services,” **said ICC Chairman Carrie Zalewski**. “If you find it hard to pay your utility bills, please contact your utility company immediately, and take advantage of the resources available through the LIHEAP program and act quickly to apply.”

UDAP provides emergency relief dollars for Illinois customers at risk of service disconnections. Following Governor Pritzker’s initial UDAP Executive Order in April 2021, more than \$110 million was used to help over 121,000 residential accounts avoid disconnection of services last year.

To be eligible for UDAP, households need to have received LIHEAP benefits between September 1, 2021 and May 31, 2022, and be in imminent threat of disconnection. A UDAP participant may receive a one-time credit, per utility, based on the utility account balance. Assistance can range from \$250 up to a maximum of \$5,000.

### **Information for Households:**

The State of Illinois offers various programs to support eligible low-income families with utility assistance. These programs are open to ALL eligible low-income Illinois families who meet the criteria, including undocumented families. While the amount of support varies based on the needs of individual families, this year’s LIHEAP recipients have received an average of \$930 per household. Through LIHEAP, support for eligible families includes:

- **One-time Direct Vendor Payment:** All LIHEAP recipients typically receive a one-time payment to help with utilities bills.
- **Crisis/Reconnection Assistance:** Funding is available for families in heating-related emergency situations.
- **Furnace Assistance:** Based on funding availability, Furnace Assistance may be provided to households that do not have an operating furnace for their residence.
- **UDAP:** UDAP provides support for current year LIHEAP and Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) customers either on a utility’s disconnection list or in imminent threat of disconnection due to an arrearage of \$250 or more. Families who receive LIHEAP benefits automatically qualify for this program and do not need to apply separately.
- **Home Weatherization Program:** The Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP) helps low income residents and households conserve fuel and reduce energy costs by making their homes and apartments more energy efficient.

### **Information for Families to Apply:**

For households interested in the LIHEAP program, the State encourages residents to apply by May 31, 2022. To apply:

- Visit [helpillinoisfamilies.com](https://helpillinoisfamilies.com) to fill out and submit a request for services form online OR visit your local agency (a list of partners throughout the State can be found [here](#))
  - o After you submit the form, someone from your local agency will be in touch.
- Call 1-833-711-0374 for assistance at any point during this process.
- Additional information about eligibility and criteria can be found on the website; links to fact sheets in English and Spanish can be found here:
  - o [English Fact Sheet](#)
  - o [Spanish Fact Sheet](#)

**About DCEO:**

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers several programs to provide utilities support to families in need. To apply for these programs, visit [helpillinoisfamilies.com](http://helpillinoisfamilies.com), or contact the hotline which provides real-time assistance in over 30 languages at 1-833-711-0374.

**About ICC:**

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) oversees the provision of adequate, reliable, efficient and safe utility services at the least possible cost to Illinois citizens served by electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water and sewer public utility companies. Additional resources are available through ICC, including counselors who can help with other utility assistance needs. They can be reached Monday through Friday, from 9 am -5 pm by calling 1-800-524-0795.

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